

the State of Idaho. I work with individuals who are typically low income, or reliant on Social Security Disability Awards for their living. The gas prices have hit these individuals very hard. Many have a strong desire to obtain employment and earn a gainful wage, but with gas prices at \$4/gallon, they simply cannot afford to go to work. There is not a reliable bus system, no train system to be utilized, and so they decide to sit at home. The nearest areas offering the best employment options are 20 miles away in either direction. Not a bad commute as the traffic is relatively minimal, but an \$8, \$9, \$10/hour job simply does not offset the cost of fuel. I live five minutes from my office, and I find myself wondering how I will pay for the fuel. I laugh when I see the oil representatives say they pay the same amount for gas as the rest of us. They may pay the \$4/gallon I do, but it has minimal to no impact on their wallet when compared to the average American. Please work harder to find a suitable solution that is long term and equitable to all Americans.

My story is not dramatic. It probably is not unique, but I think that is why I am taking the time to email a response to your news letter.

Trenton.

I am a thirty-year-old mother of two young boys and registered nurse. My husband and I budget. We save. We avoid debt. Our home is modest, much of it built with our own hands. We each drive a ten-year-old car. We rarely eat out. We will also earn nearly \$86,000 this year, far above the median Idaho household income. Yet, I am feeling the burden of increased energy costs.

How can that be? Our story really began with 9-11, or the economic downturn that immediately followed it. Downsizing, and then more downsizing meant layoffs for my husband, a new college graduate at that time. Jobs were scarce for new grads, and we depleted our savings, eventually turning to credit cards in order to feed and insure our young family.

The economy picked up and he found consistent work. Then, I graduated from college and we began attacking our credit cards with added fervor. The future began looking brighter. We set debt payoff goals and looked for ways to reduce the number of my hours away from home so that I could focus on our young boys. This December I was going to work one less day per pay period. It was going to be our Christmas present to our family.

Now that dream does not seem likely.

Increases in energy have led to price hikes around the board. Wheat costs have skyrocketed, fresh produce too, and, let us not even talk about milk and gasoline. The increases mean that, in order for us to pay off our debt and continue saving, I will have to continue working my regular schedule. If we want any extras, like a date out, an occasional vacation, or to finish projects around the house, I have to work extra shifts to cover those. I do not see how I will be able to reduce the number of hours at my job.

You ask what priorities I think Congress should set to solve this crisis? My answers may seem a little strange, but I am a believer in capitalism, fiscal responsibility and hard work. They really do work! I would like to see our leaders:

Increase domestic oil production & alternative energy production. Remember the South? Many say that they lost the war because they did not have infrastructure. We need to remember past mistakes so they do not revisit our future. Our refineries are aging. We import more than we export. Regulations make it nearly impossible to build new refineries and expensive for new drill

sites. We need to find a balance with responsible environmental practices that allow new refineries to be built and natural resources to be extracted.

Do not set price caps. If oil and gas become too expensive, there will be incentive for alternative fuels & for Americans to conserve!

Look at ways to decrease our tax load. Americans work very hard for every penny we earn. Find ways to be more fiscally responsible so that our tax burden can be lightened to help offset our increasing energy expenses.

Do not forget the younger generation. My generation is paying thousands in to social security & other programs that will be bankrupt before we ever get to use them. We feel the added strain of paying now, while trying to find ways to be self sufficient because we expect to have a bankrupt country by the time we get to retirement age. We need to invest in our future. And please do not forget our little children. What legacy will we be leaving them?

Quit labeling the Oil Companies as the bad guys. Our current conundrum is nothing more than the classic supply versus demand. If demand goes up and supply cannot meet it, the cost will go up. This concept is taught in economics classes around the country. Why should we expense the oil companies to work for nothing? These companies provide many Americans with good jobs. Let us find a way to bring more of these jobs home!

Thank you for your time,

DIXIE, *Rexburg.*

RECOGNIZING SBE, INC. OF BARRE, VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the innovation and achievements of SBE, Inc. in Barre, VT.

For decades, SBE has demonstrated an exceptional ability to adapt to the demands of a changing marketplace. The company started as Sprague Electric in 1945, but today SBE is using cutting-edge technology to develop capacitors for use in green cars, alternative energies, Taser stun guns, and advanced military equipment. These innovative products have created dozens of quality Vermont jobs that reflect our state's commitment towards moving to alternative energy sources.

I commend Ed Sawyer, president and CEO of SBE, and all of the hard-working employees in Barre for their foresight and innovation. I ask unanimous consent that a September 1, 2008, Burlington Free Press article about the company be printed in the RECORD so all Senators can read about the success and commendable business practices of this sustainable Vermont company.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Sept. 1, 2008]

BARRE FIRM ADAPTS PRODUCTS TO SURVIVE: CAPACITOR COMPANY MOVES FOCUS FROM TV AND STEREOS TO TASERS AND HYBRIDS

(By Dan McLean)

BARRE.—SBE Inc., built on 20th century capacitor technology, has survived by continuing to adapt, taking a Vermont-made product and carving a national market.

SBE has branched off from its trademarked orange colored capacitors, known worldwide

as the "orange drop," and is pursuing "power ring" technology for hybrid vehicles, alternative energy producers and military applications.

"This is sustainable manufacturing. It's a different product mix," said Ed Sawyer, president and CEO of the SBE Inc.

SBE has landed two rounds of U.S. Department of Energy grants to pursue capacitor technology for the burgeoning hybrid vehicle industry. The money is helping to bankroll research and development that are creating jobs. "We applied for the grant in a competitive process along with approximately 2,000 other firms across the U.S.," Sawyer said.

By continuing to innovate, the manufacturer has been able to save itself from becoming obsolete.

Over a billion capacitors have been made by the Barre-based manufacturer during the past six decades, Sawyer said. A capacitor is an electronic device that can store energy.

KEYS TO SURVIVAL

Boom times continued into the late 1960s and early 1970s for the capacitor manufacturer. During that time, about 900 employees built capacitors for companies such as AC Delco, Magnavox, RCA and Zenith.

The industry has changed a lot since Sprague Electric entered into a subcontracting agreement with the Rock of Ages Corp. to manufacture capacitors on their behalf in 1945. SBE Inc. is the successor to Sprague Electric Co.

SBE has retrofitted. The company has translated a mid-20th century technology into a modern application for green cars, alternative energies, Taser stun guns and military equipment. As the decades passed, foreign competitors—mostly in China, Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines—began making capacitors for one-quarter to one-third the price, Sawyer said. Aside from the hefty price competition, work was lost because the manufacturing of many electronic devices that use capacitors moved from the U.S. to Asia.

When Sprague Electric sold the company to SBE in 1986, it was down to 19 employees, Sawyer said. SBE now has about 50 employees and is hiring five more engineers to work on capacitors for hybrid cars.

The company survived, Sawyer said, because of its longstanding philosophy: "new products need to be developed to keep the company viable."

SBE Inc.—which leases 30,000 square feet of the 110,000 square feet the manufacturer owned a few decades ago—was created from the shell that Sprague Electric was leaving behind after being decimated by foreign competition, Sawyer said. The management team banded together to buy the operation, forming SBE, he said.

"If they didn't have the motivation, it would have been just one more 'closed business' story," Sawyer said.

Since becoming president in 2002, Sawyer promoted the development of patents. Three patents have been issued on high-voltage, pulse technologies, and six more are pending, he said.

Unlike a semiconductor, which requires power be applied to it, a capacitor has the ability to hold a charge and can change direct current to alternating current, which is used to power an electric motor.

JOB POTENTIAL

Job growth, particularly skilled manufacturing positions, should continue at SBE.

If the capacitor technology SBE is developing for hybrid vehicles is embraced by General Motors, as Sawyer hopes, employment could grow by another 100 people. "It would be huge job growth for the state," he said.

Rob Peterson, a GM spokesman, said suppliers for the Chevy Volt hybrid vehicle have

not been established yet. "We have made some decisions on suppliers, but we are very, very early on in the process."

The Chevy Volt is set to hit markets in November 2010, Peterson said. The car is designed to travel 40 miles on an electric charge before tapping into electricity generated by a gas-fueled engine.

The bulk of SBE's sales remain in standard capacitors used in industrial lighting, welding equipment and supplies for cell phone towers.

"This is still what's paying the bills," he said.

SBE added to its product lineup when it became the exclusive provider for capacitors for Taser International Inc. in 2002, Sawyer said. SBE has sold about a million capacitors for the stun guns carried by police departments across the country, he said.

SBE landed Taser as a client because of the Barre company's history as an industry leader. "They actually approached us, basically on our reputation in the industry," he said.

In 2007, SBE's revenue was \$3 million to \$5 million. Sawyer expects those figures to be 20 to 25 percent higher this year. Despite the sales, earnings are lackluster.

SBE, a privately held company, is not turning a profit, but that's because profits are being rolled back into the research and development budget, Sawyer said.

FUNDING SOURCES

Department of Energy grants are helpful, but they don't offset the losses, he said.

SBE received \$850,000 from the Energy Department to perfect hybrid vehicle capacitor technology. The technology could make lighter, smaller capacitors and slice a few hundred dollars from the price of a hybrid vehicle, Sawyer said.

Grant money isn't the only source powering new endeavors at SBE. The company's eye toward innovation, and reliable revenue stream, caught the interest of "angel" investors, Sawyer said. Such investors have poured in more than \$2 million in the last four years, he said.

The work for Taser helped SBE get traction with the investment community and the existing capacitor business added a sense of security.

"There is less risk than two guys in a garage. We are an existing entity that is paying the bills," Sawyer said.

The military is interested in the power ring technology to shoot "a high energy laser" from a vehicle," Sawyer said.

The technology of the capacitors is similar. It's the sizes of the pieces that vary. Capacitors for the hybrid cars are 6 inches in diameter, substantially larger than the standard capacitors, which are ½-inch to 1-inch wide.

Capacitors being used by solar and wind energy producers to store and filter electricity are about 12 inches in diameter, he said.

York Capacitor—a similar operation in Winooski—closed in 2005 after being purchased by a South Carolina company that moved manufacturing to Mexico. York Capacitor failed to adapt, Sawyer said. "They never changed."

"I don't think we'd be in business today . . . if we didn't make the choices we made to target the markets we are now," he said.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LARRY THORNTON

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I want to share a story with my colleagues about the accomplishments of

one of my constituents. It begins with a feature story in *Landscape Superintendent and Maintenance Professional* magazine and ends with selection as the Air Force Association's 2008 Department of Veterans Affairs Employee of the Year Award. The link between the two is a fine veteran and fellow Hawaii resident, Mr. Larry L. Thornton.

In June of last year, *Landscape Superintendent and Maintenance Professional* magazine featured an article entitled "Maintaining Honor," on the quality of the grounds-keeping at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. The national cemetery, located on the island of Oahu and known to Hawaii locals as "Punchbowl," is a crown jewel of America's memorials, and the last resting place of thousands who so valiantly served their Nation. Millions visit Punchbowl annually, to walk the grounds, to stand silently in its beauty, and to pay tribute to those laid to rest there.

The article featured pictures of the groundskeepers, each identified by first and last name. Unbeknownst to the readers, these hard working stewards are injured veterans, some with disabilities for which others may have written them off as unable to contribute a day's labor. But thanks in large part to one man, one of their fellow veterans, they succeed beyond such expectations, one day at a time. That man, their supervisor for VA's Compensated Work Therapy Program for disabled veterans, managed to escape the feature photos. That man is Punchbowl's Cemetery caretaker foreman, Larry Thornton.

Fortunately, Mr. Thornton could not escape the limelight when he finally received just recognition for his work with disabled veterans and for his dedicated labor to maintain a national shrine. This year his work was recognized and earned him the Air Force Association's Department of Veterans Affairs Employee of the Year Award for 2008. I join the Air Force Association in commending this fine veteran, Mr. Thornton, for his service to his fellow veterans and our Nation. His service began long before this award, and I am sure that it will continue long after it. I am doubly proud of him, as a Senator from Hawaii and as the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.●

TRIBUTE TO STUART POLLAK

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased and honored to pay tribute to Stuart Pollack for his many years of service to the Hebrew Free Loan Association based in San Francisco, CA.

Stuart graduated as valedictorian from Lowell High School in San Francisco in 1955. He went on to attend Stanford University for his undergraduate degree and graduated from Harvard Law School magna cum laude in 1962. In his first year out of law school, Stuart would serve as a law clerk to Chief Justice Earl Warren and

to Justices Stanley Reed and Harold Burton. Following his work as a law clerk, Stuart moved on to the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division; Special Assistant to Assistant Attorney General.

After finishing his position with the Department of Justice, Stuart went into private practice at Howard Rice Nemerovski Canady & Pollak where he served as partner for 14 years before becoming a judge on the San Francisco Superior Court, a position he held through 2002. Continuing with a long list of legal accomplishments, Stuart currently serves as an associate justice on the California Court of Appeals, Division Three. Even with his demanding schedule as an associate justice, Stuart has consistently made time for Hebrew Free Loan Association and other organizations in which he has a leadership role: Jewish Community Relations Council, the Jewish Community Federation, New Israel Fund, America-Israel Friendship League and Congregation Sherith Israel.

I commend the mission of Hebrew Free Loan Association and am thrilled by the positive impact it has on the lives of those who receive its assistance. Over the last 110 years, Hebrew Free Loan Association has provided interest-free loans to people in need; assistance in the form of a loan rather than a hand out. Stuart's many years of dedicated involvement with Hebrew Free Loan Association, including his 2 years as president, has allowed many from the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish community to realize their dreams.

After nearly 30 years of continuing service to Hebrew Free Loan Association, I remain in admiration of Stuart's strong sense of civic duty. Along with hundreds of his friends and admirers throughout the San Francisco Bay area, I wish him many more years of continued community involvement and leadership.●

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT PAUL STARZYK

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the memory of a dedicated law enforcement officer, Sergeant Paul Starzyk of the city of Martinez Police Department. For the past 12 years, Sergeant Starzyk worked tirelessly to provide the citizens of Martinez with safety and service. On September 6, 2008, Sergeant Starzyk was tragically killed in the line of duty.

Sergeant Starzyk, an Antioch resident, worked as a banker and at a local soup kitchen before he became active in law enforcement. He was hired by the city of Martinez Police Department as a reserve officer in 1992 and became a police officer in December 1994. After a brief period with the Pleasant Hill Police Department, Sergeant Starzyk came back to the Martinez Police Department in April 1997 and was promoted to sergeant in December 2007.

A member of the Central Contra Costa Narcotics Enforcement Team